

Energy secretary visits McNary Dam

Perry mum on BPA privatization

By George Plaven
EO Media Group

U.S. Secretary of Energy Rick Perry was noncommittal Monday when asked about a proposal in the president's budget to privatize the Bonneville Power Administration transmission grid following a tour of McNary Dam along the Columbia River.

Perry, who was joined by congressmen Greg Walden (R-Oregon) and Dan Newhouse (R-Washington), met briefly with reporters outside the dam where he said hydroelectricity will continue to play an important role in America's energy strategy.

The Trump administration, however, has proposed selling off transmission assets owned by BPA, which markets electric power generated by the Columbia River system — including McNary Dam. Northwest lawmakers have roundly criticized the plan, saying it will raise rates for consumers and affect reliability in rural areas.

In fact, both Walden and Newhouse signed on to a letter sent June 5 to Perry and Mick Mulvaney, director of the White House Office of Man-



Secretary of Energy Rick Perry, McNary Dam operations manager Dave Coleman and Rep. Greg Walden, R-Oregon, tour the McNary Dam on Monday in Umatilla.

agement and Budget, urging them to support the BPA.

"We believe divesting BPA's transmission assets will harm individuals and businesses, divert capital needed for further infrastructure investment in the Northwest, and undermine regional utility coordination," the letter reads in part. "BPA has helped to develop and administer the complex electrical system that powers the Northwest, now providing affordable and reliable power to over 12 million people and the businesses that help the region thrive."

Still, Perry was mum when asked where he stood



Secretary of Energy Rick Perry speaks about hydroelectric power at a press conference after touring the McNary Dam with Rep. Greg Walden, R-Oregon, on Monday in Umatilla.

on the issue, saying only that they should not be afraid to have that conversation be-

fore moving on to another topic.

Walden, on the other

hand, was more direct in his defense of the agency. He expressed confidence that the BPA will remain public, adding that the notion of privatization has united just about every member of the Northwest delegation.

"(BPA) does its job. And it has a darn important job in our region," Walden said.

On the subject of hydroelectricity and renewable energy as a whole, Perry said he is an "all-of-the-above guy," pointing to the development of wind power and fracked natural gas during his time as governor of Texas.

Hydroelectricity will play an important role moving forward Perry said, and he commended the work done at McNary Dam.

"My hat's off to every different part of this operation to make sure it runs smoothly," he said.

McNary Dam is just the first stop for Perry as he arrived in northeast Oregon and southeast Washington.

On Tuesday, he planned to travel to the Tri-Cities for a visit to the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, HAMMER Federal Training Center and Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

Perry said security at Hanford is "as good as there is in the world," despite a partial tunnel collapse in May that contained highly radioactive waste.

"We never like to have surprises, but we have them from time to time," he said. "The long-term cleanup of that site is what's important. That's what I wanted to see."

While at Hanford, Perry planned to visit the site's Plutonium Finishing Plant, the 2268 Building, the WTP facility and the PUREX tunnels.

He described both Hanford and McNary Dam as examples of American strength and ingenuity.

"This is a fascinating part of America's story," Perry said. "There's extraordinary history."

DACA supporters gather at Oregon Capitol

By Claire Withycombe
Capital Bureau

Oregon's capital city was the Monday night stop for youth activists traveling from California to Washington to show support for federal programs that allow certain

undocumented immigrants, including young people and those from countries experiencing war or environmental disasters, to stay in the United States.

A few dozen people gathered on Oregon's capitol mall Monday evening in a show of support for recipients of the federal government's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, called DACA, and those who have received Temporary Protected Status.

DACA applies to certain immigrants who came to the country as children; temporary protected status can be extended to people who came to the U.S. from countries that the Department of Homeland Security has designated unsafe to return to due to such "extreme" conditions as environmental disasters or war.

The gathering followed a weekend of violence that broke out between white supremacists and counter-protestors gathering in Charlottesville, Virginia, which organizer Leonardo Reyes, of the Oregon DACA coalition, said rendered him "speechless."

"We are at a time when we're trying to figure out what our country stands for and what we believe in," Reyes told the crowd.

The event at the state capitol was held Monday not only to commemorate the fifth-year anniversary of the first date people could receive DACA — Aug. 15, 2012 — but also to protest the action by a group of state attorneys general who have threatened to sue the federal government if the Trump administration does not discontinue the DACA program by Sept. 5.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton and officials from nine other states have said



Supporters of the DACA program for children of illegal immigrants gather on the Capitol Mall Monday in Salem.

that if the federal government does not take action by that date, they will file lawsuits.

According to previous media reports, attorneys general from Alabama, Arkansas, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Nebraska, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia are also part of the group asking the federal government to rescind the DACA program.

Reyes said before Monday's rally that activists wanted to create regional unity among states on the West Coast.

The Oregon DACA Coalition, a Salem-area organization formed by DACA youth last November, also advocates long-term immigration reform.

DACA recipients are in the program for two years, at which point they can seek to have that status renewed if they continue to meet the program's criteria.

Activists say there are about 20,000 recipients of DACA in the state, and about 800,000 nationally.

The gathering follows a legislative session that expanded some protections for undocumented immigrants in the midst of a national climate of uncertainty over immigration policy.

State lawmakers passed

policies expanding healthcare coverage to all children, including undocumented kids, and mandating insurance and public health plan coverage for a range of reproductive health services, including abortions, to patients regardless of immigration status.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, a Democrat, has been a vocal supporter of these policies.

In February, Brown signed an executive order her office characterized as "broadening" the state's 30-year-old "sanctuary state" law. Under the executive order, state agencies cannot use state funds, resources or personnel "for the purpose of detecting or apprehending" people who are violating federal immigration laws. State agencies also cannot restrict services based on immigration status, unless required by state or federal law.

Since 1987, Oregon law has prohibited state and local authorities from enforcing federal immigration law if an individual's only violation of the law is that they are in the U.S. without legal status.

This session, the legislature also passed House Bill 3464, which prohibits public bodies from asking about citizenship status or disclosing certain information about individuals, unless the disclosure is required by state or federal law.

The state's approach is not without opponents. State Sen. Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer, criticized what she called "flawed immigration policy on the state and federal level" in a Monday statement issued by a spokesman for the Senate Republicans.

Several legislators in the Oregon House of Representatives. Reps. Greg Barreto, R-Cove; Mike Nearman, R-Independence; and Sal Esquivel, R-Medford — have filed an initiative petition, IP 22, that would repeal the state's sanctuary law.

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